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# HISTORY OF DHARMAŚĀSTRA

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says that this is scarcely more than an arbitrary assumption (p. XLVIII of Kirfel's Intro. and J. V. O. I. vol. VIII. p. 31).

The present author may tentatively accept most of the conclusions of Kirfel, but he differs as stated above from Kirfel's view that the five characteristic topics (*sarga &c.*) are the oldest constituent parts of the whole Purāna Literature.

A lengthy discussion of the age of the Purānas is not very relevant to the subject of this section. But it would not be entirely out of place if the author said a few words thereon.

**The author's position about the Purānas is as follows:** We know hardly anything about the Purāna mentioned in Atharva-veda, the Śatapatha and the ancient Upanisads; but this much is clear that Purāna had attained a status of sacredness like the Vedas and was closely associated with Itihāsa even in Vedic times. This is the first stage in the evolution of Purāna Literature, but we know nothing about the contents of the Purāna in those ancient times. The Tai. Ā. mentions *Purāṇām*; therefore in its time there must have been three Purānas at least. As Āp. Dh. S. quotes four verses from a Purāna and expressly names Bhavīsyatpurāna, it follows that by the 5th or 4th century B. C. at the latest there was in existence a Bhavīsyat-purāna and other Purānas or a Purāna, that contained sarga and pratisarga and some Smṛti material. This we may regard as the 2nd definite stage of Purāna Literature, of the contents of which we have some traces at least.

The Mahābhārata quotes hundreds of verses (called *ślokas*, *gāthās*, *anuvāṃśa ślokas*), some of which have a bearing upon Paurānika subjects and have a Paurānika ring. Some examples may be cited. The Vanaparva<sup>1384</sup> quotes two verses about the spiritual prowess of Viśvāmitra and about his assertion that he was a brāhmana. The Anuśāsanaparva<sup>1385</sup> quotes certain

1384. यत्रानुर्वंशं भगवान् जामदग्न्यस्तथा जगौ । विश्वामित्रस्य तां हृष्ट्वा विद्वितिमि-  
माहृषीम् ॥ कान्यकुब्जेऽपि वत्सोमनिन्द्रेण सह कौशिक ! ततः क्षत्रादपाक्रामद् ब्राह्मणोऽस्मीति  
चाब्रवीत् ॥ वनपर्व 87. 17-18 Brāhmanas alone were entitled to drink soma in  
a Vedic sacrifice and not Ksatriyas Vide H. of Dh vol. II, p. 1179.

1385. गाथाश्चाप्यत्र गायन्ति पितृगीता युधिष्ठिर । सनत्कुमारो भगवान्पुरा मय्यन्यभाषत ॥  
अपि नः स कुले जायाद्यो नो दद्यात्त्रयोदशीम् । मयाह स र्षि संयुक्तं पायसं दक्षिणायने । आज्ञेन  
वापि लौहेन मयास्त्वेव यतन्नतः । हस्तिच्छायाह विधिवत्कर्णव्यजनवीजितम् ॥ एतस्या बहवः पुत्रा  
यथेकोऽपि गया व्रजेत् । अनुशासन 88. 11-14. Compare विष्णुपुरा III 16 17-20,  
ब्रह्माण्ड III 19. 10-11, वायु 83. 10-12, all of which have the half verse अपि नः...  
शीम् as in अनुशासन विष्णु and ब्रह्माण्ड add one half verse 'गौरिं वाप्युद्वहेत्कन्यं  
नील वा वृषहृत्सृजेत् ।

gāthās said to have been sung by the pitrs about the importance of a son or sons, which agree in letter and spirit with verses on the same subject in the Purānas. In the Udyoga-parva<sup>1386</sup> Bhisma is said to have addressed a verse to Paraśurāma that was sung by Marutta and declared in a Purāna. In the Purānas also there are frequent quotations of ślokas,<sup>1387</sup> gāthās and anuvamśaślokas sung by people described as *Paurānika* (in Vāyu 70. 76, 88. 114-116, 88. 168-169, Brahmānda III. 63. 69-70) or as *purāndāh* or *purāṇajñāh* in Vāyu, 83. 171 and 95. 19, Brahmānda III. 63. 171). Vāyu (93. 94-101) mentions several gāthās as sung by Yayāti, most of which occur in the Ādiparva 75. 50-53 and 85. 12-15, Brahmānda III. 68. 96-103 and in other purānas also. It is quite possible that these gāthās and ślokas said to have been declared by those who knew Purānas were taken from the Purāna or Purānas known to Āpastamba. As Yāj. I. 3 regards Purāna as one of the sources of dharma, it follows that some Purānas containing smṛti material must have been composed a good deal before that smṛti i. e. before the 2nd or 3rd century A. D. at the latest. This is the third stage in the evolution of Purānas. It is difficult to say when the extant Matsya was originally composed but it was revised about the middle (or close) of the 3rd century A. D., since it speaks of the downfall of the Āndhra dynasty, but does not refer to the Guptas. But it is possible that the original kernel of the Matsya may be earlier than this by a few centuries. The same applies to Vāyu and Brahmānda. The Vāyu and Brahmānda also were compiled or added to about 320-335 A. D., since they refer to the Guptas but do not name any Gupta king. These two in their present form may also be referred to this third stage. Most of the Mahā-purānas were composed or completed in the period from the 5th

1386. अयं चापि विश्वद्वालम् पुराणे श्रूयते विभो । मरुत्तेन महाबुद्धे गति श्लोको महात्मना ॥ सुरोत्पत्यवलिप्तस्य कार्याकार्यमजानतः । उद्यधमतिपन्नस्य परित्यागो विधीयते ॥ उद्योग 178 47-48. The cr ed has a wavy line below पुराणे and reads 'कार्यं भवति ज्ञानसन्द्' with a wavy line for परि "यते. This verse 'सुरो &c.' is ज्ञान्तिपर्व 140 48 and is also ज्ञान्ति 57. 6-7, where it is said that it occurred in बृहस्पतिमत आविपर्व 140. 54 has this verse but reads the last पाद as न्याचयं भवति ज्ञानसन्द् ।

1387. भविष्यं कीर्तयिष्यामि ज्ञान्तनोस्तु निबोधत । इदं चोदाहरन्त्यत्र श्लोकं प्रति महाभिषक्तु (भिषक्) । यं यं कार्म्यां स्पृशति जीर्णं रोगिणमेव वा । पुनर्युवा च भवति तस्मात्तं ज्ञान्तं विदुः ॥ मत्स्य 50. 41-43, वायु 99 238 The verse यं यं contains a popular etymology of the word ज्ञान्त. The word भविष्य should mean only भविष्य-पुराण, since it is the सूत who says this and ज्ञान्त was a king anterior to सूत by some generations.

or 6th century A. D. to the 9th century A. D. This represents the 4th stage in the evolution of Purāna literature. The Upapurānas began to be compiled from about the 7th or 8th century A. D. and their numbers went on increasing till about the 13th century A. D. or even later. This is the last phase. Thus there is enough evidence to hold that the Purānas began to influence Hindu society a few centuries before Christ, that their influence continued in full force till the 17th or 18th century A. D. and that it continues to some extent even now. After the 9th century no further Mahāpurānas appear, but additional matter appears to have been unscrupulously inserted in several Purānas, the worst example of the kind being the third part of the Bhavisya, which contains stories of Adam and Eve, of Pṛthvirāj and Jaicandra, Taimur, Akbar, Caitanya, Bhattoji, Nadirshah and so on.

The word 'purāna' occurs over a dozen times in the R̥gveda, is an adjective and means 'ancient, old'. The Nighantu (III. 27) mentions six Vedic words as having the sense of 'purāna' viz. *pratnam*, *pradivaḥ*, *praiyāḥ*, *sanem*, *pūnyam*, *ahnōya*. Yāska (Nirukta III. 19) derives the word 'purāna' as 'purānavam bhavati' (what was new in former times). The R̥gveda does not contain the word 'purātana' (ancient). Purāna may be a very old form of 'purātana' through the intermediate form 'purāna'. From meaning ancient the word 'purāna' came to mean a work dealing with ancient tales, it became a noun and was applied in the times of the Atharvaveda, the Śatapatha and the Upanisads to a class of works containing ancient tales. When purāna came to mean a work dealing with ancient tales, to speak of a Bhavisyat-purāna was apparently a contradiction in terms. That contradiction was probably not minded or was ignored by the thought that works that narrated old tales gradually came to include comparatively recent ones and had therefore to adopt a prophetic style of composition with reference to the latter.

The Vāyu<sup>1388</sup> derives the word 'Purāna' from 'purā' (in ancient times, formerly) and the root 'an' (to breathe or live), and therefore according to it the word literally means 'that which lives in the past' or 'that which breathes ancient times'.

1388 यस्मात्पुरा ह्यनतीदं पुराणं तेन तत्स्मृतम् । निरुक्तमस्य यो वेद सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ।  
बायु I. 203, पुरा परम्परा वदति पुराणं तेन वै स्मृतम् । पद्म V 2 53; the ब्रह्माण्ड I 1 173  
has यस्मात्पुरा ह्यभूच्चैतत्पुराणं तेन तत्स्मृतम् । निरुक्त .मुच्यते ॥